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ABSTRACT

The administration and faculty of Carthage College (a four-year liberal arts college with a primarily white, middle class student body and faculty) instituted the Heritage Studies Program to promote multiculturalism through writing across the curriculum. The four-semester sequence required of all first- and second-year students was approved by the faculty in the spring of 1989. A substantially revised program (eliminating the traditional great books approach within a teacher-centered classroom) was instituted in the fall of 1991. The revised program became a genuine collaboration between teacher and student and among the students themselves. The program explores culture as a dynamic process and examines how cultures work and interact. Groups of faculty members meet regularly to share ideas about teaching the core texts in each of the Heritage seminars. The program also sponsors summer retreats, as well as an intersession retreat. The kind of team teaching fostered by the Heritage program exists on several levels. A systematic assessment of the effort to engender awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity has not been undertaken. The diffusion of the program's methods and values has not been as widespread or as rapid as the faculty might have desired. The success of the Heritage Studies Program has placed a great strain on the rest of the curriculum as the multicultural concerns of the program need to be reflected in the curriculum as a whole. (RS)

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"Diversity and the Small College Community: Negotiating Multiculturalism Through Writing Across the Curriculum"

Pamela Smiley, David K. Steege, and Daniel Tobin

Carthage College is a 4-year liberal arts college, located on the shore of Lake Michigan, half-way between Milwaukee and Chicago. Most of our 1,200 full-time students are white, from the surrounding area, and of middle-class background. A sizeable percentage of them are first-generation college students. Of our 93 full-time faculty members, 63 are white men, 27 are white women, and 3 are people of color. For the last 5 years, Carthage has aggressively limited its new faculty hirings to graduates of Ivy League or Big-10 schools.

In 1989, despite this very non-diverse population, Carthage College committed itself to providing students with diversity, defined as:

an awareness of the intellectual and social heritage of world civilizations,

an appreciation for the diversity of knowledge and traditions within the contemporary world,

and the abilities needed to live as productive and caring individuals and members of society.

The challenge, of course, is how to encourage the diversity implicit in these three goals when neither we, nor the students we are teaching, are diverse. As a representative Midwestern college--small, with a culturally homogenous faculty and student body--we have been faced with very special challenges in developing a multi-cultural focus to our writing and critical skills program. We want our students to have the common experience of being introduced to the skills needed to appreciate their heritage and to live as productive and caring members of society. Yet we also want them to understand that ideas, values and assumptions are negotiated through complex transactions between human beings within and across communities. How are we to accomplish all of this--given our homogenous community? The response to this challenge is the slow evolution of what we call our Heritage Program.

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Heritage Sequence

In response to curricular concerns, the administration and faculty of Carthage College instituted the Heritage Studies Program. The four-semester sequence required of all first- and second year students was approved by the faculty in the Spring of 1989. Faculty were drawn from across disciplines to staff the upwards of twenty sections of each course in the sequence, with the hope that faculty members would bring their particular area expertise to bear on their teaching. According to the original plan, Heritage Studies "consisted of four courses designed to acquaint students with the cultural heritage of world communities as well as to develop the skills of thinking and communicating critically." In practice, however, the sequence was organized chronologically with a full year devoted to exploring the traditional canon of western culture from the classical period to the twentieth century. Moreover, though intended as seminar courses that would emphasize the development of critical thinking and writing skills, these early prototypes relied heavily on the traditional lecture format, and even occasionally on multiple choice exams. Thus, while the original intention of Heritage was to emphasize multicultural concerns and writing across the curriculum, in actuality the sequence used a more traditional great books approach within a teacher-centered classroom.

For several reasons this approach became unsatisfactory to many. Quite a number of the faculty, including the academic dean, were philosophically and pedagogically opposed to the privileging of western experience in the courses, or at least to an uncomplicated presentation of western values and ideals. In addition, because of the course's tendency to present culture as a compendium of texts, artifacts, and ideas to be handed down through generations, students quickly became disengaged from the course material. In the classroom experience, there was little or no exposure to the process of cultural construction.

As a result of these inconsistencies in the program, in the Fall of 1991, a substantially revised Heritage Program was instituted. As we now describe it in the course program, "by 'heritage' we mean a dynamic cultural legacy which must be actively constructed and reconstructed through constant negotiations among the past, present, and the future, and between individuals and their

communities. 'Heritage' is not contained within a predetermined set of books or artifacts, nor can it be simply transmitted from teacher to student. Cultural transactions shaping a heritage are studied analytically, creatively, and collaboratively." In turn, students are asked to examine their own ideas, values, and assumptions by testing them, questioning them, and re-articulating them within the wider dialogue of cultural construction.

Therefore, from a sequence that initially required students to spend significant time attending lectures, Heritage Studies has now become a genuine collaboration between teacher and student and among the students themselves. In other words, it has become a learner-centered course in which texts are not merely received but questioned, discussed, and evaluated. Within the seminars, students are encouraged to engage texts by using writing as a process of inquiry. Under the guidance of our Heritage Writer-in-Residence, faculty from a variety of disciplines are teaching writing using primarily the process method and the portfolio system. As such, critical thinking skills are cultivated through close attention to reading, listening, conversing, writing. The four courses require progressively complex written and oral work, including increasingly independent research.

Finally, from a program that initially treated western experience as a static body of information, Heritage now explores culture as a dynamic process, and examines how cultures work and interact within the context of the larger global community. The first course of the sequence challenges students to reflect on the ideas, values, and assumptions shaping their own education in the West. Through sustained study of Shakespeare's The Tempest and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, students confront questions about the nature and consequences of personal and cultural knowledge: How--for better or for worse--can knowledge transform individuals and societies? In the second course, students experience the encounter between European and African cultures from two contrasting perspectives at a moment of cultural crisis. Two representations of nineteenth century colonialism are studied: Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart. What happens when cultures collide? How does each culture hold itself together? In the third course students are challenged to

make personal and intellectual sense of a non-western culture. Students and faculty, working together, use materials from contemporary and historical Japan to interpret the workings of a specific culture, and to become aware of the force of culture in their own lives. This course intends to foster intercultural and global thinking, understanding and communicating, and identifies markers of cross-cultural difference that will enable students to analyze their own culture. In the final course, students study ideas, values, and assumptions intrinsic to American cultures. Questions of individuality and community, difference and mutuality, memory and change, are engaged. Representative texts include Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, Toni Morrison's Beloved, Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried, and Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine. By the time the students reach their fourth semester the distance created by defamiliarization, via Japan and Africa, allows them to see American cultures as possibility and variety. By recasting the Heritage sequence as a series of cultural studies courses in which writing is encouraged as a method of inquiry, we are transforming, not only our student body, but also ourselves as faculty, as well as the curriculum as a whole.

This on going transformation has not only forced us to develop new teaching strategies, it has also forced us to develop institutional structures to maximize faculty dialogue. Inevitably, these new directions continue to lead to new problems for which we continue to seek innovative solutions.

Clusters

"Clusters" are groups of faculty members who meet regularly to share ideas about teaching the core texts in each of the Heritage semesters. In one Heritage cluster, for example, there is a representative from the Religion, Political Science, Business, Music, and Literature departments. Obviously this makes for interesting exchanges. The business department representative sets up his writing groups as if they were small businesses in the field of publication. Each of the student members specializes in one area of the final product: editing, brainstorming, creative elaboration, proof-reading. The group as a whole is responsible for each member's paper--truly an experience in

collaborative learning.

The cluster just outlined is a particularly happy mixture of personalities and viewpoints. They meet weekly and often become so excited in our exchange of ideas, that we leave and enter our classrooms with the bittersweet wish that we could continue the discussions we've had in our cluster with our students.

In addition to being "inspirational," clusters have also become a center for more practical activities: sharing responsibilities for arranging field trips to the theater and the Zen temple, distributing student questionnaires, and generally enriching each other's sections. However, while some cluster groups are a happy mixture of personalities, such is not always the case. As we all know, there is always a small, yet constant, percentage of faculty members who do not "play well with others." There is something very artificial about grouping 5 faculty members together and demanding that they share and inspire each other; frankly, it often just plain does not work. Suggestions about allowing faculty members more freedom to choose who they cluster with, to choose how they cluster, to play with a more flexible class schedule that encourages team-teaching and sharing of talents--all these are still rumbles beneath the official surface of our program. Rumbles, perhaps, but still creative possibilities for expanding the effectiveness of faculty clusters.

Retreats/Faculty Development

In addition to the ongoing work of the Heritage faculty clusters, for the past two years the program has sponsored two week-long summer retreats, as well as one three day intersession retreat. One of the key reasons for these retreats has been to spur faculty development, especially in the areas of critical thinking, multiculturalism, and writing across the curriculum. A second major reason for the retreats has been to foster a collaborative spirit among faculty from across disciplines. To these ends, both Heritage faculty and faculty who were not teaching Heritage were invited to participate.

The first Heritage Retreat was held in August of 1991. With the help of a team of consultants from the Bay Area Writing Project and the National Writing Project, faculty participated in a series of workshops that not only required

they theorize about strategies for written communication in the classroom but to enter into the writing process themselves. In addition to these workshops, sessions were held on curriculum planning and development, specifically with regard to Heritage I and Heritage III. In these sessions the vision of Heritage as a multicultural course of study began to be debated by faculty, and finally accepted. To follow up on the work accomplished during this initial retreat, to consider student assessments of the newly re-designed Heritage courses, and to help faculty in their preparations for Heritage II and IV, another short intersession retreat was held in December.

In August 1992, Carthage held its second week-long Heritage Retreat. Where the first two retreats focused almost exclusively on the writing process and on curricular concerns, this third retreat concentrated wholly on Multiculturalism and Critical Thinking. Two consultants, one who offered strategies for incorporating models of critical thinking in the classroom, and another who presented models for cooperative learning within a multicultural context, shared their observations. Additional sessions were held that were intended to focus, once again, on the writing process, as well as to explore strategies for oral communication in the classroom, and finally to initiate new faculty into the themes, methods, and goals of the Heritage Program. In addition to these sessions, a group of faculty and students participated in a day-long diversity training workshop facilitated by the National Coalition Building Institute. Another retreat is being planned for this August, and will be organized around presentations made solely by the Carthage College faculty.

Along with the retreats, many of the Heritage faculty have attended outside conferences and workshops, not only to develop their own teaching skills, but to be able to bring back new ideas and methods to the rest of the Heritage faculty. Several of us participated in workshops held by the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication; one spent part of January on a field-study experience of Pueblo culture, while others have attended various conferences on multiculturalism across the country. In each case, we found ourselves rather anomalous--few others attending these conferences and workshops were from small midwestern colleges. Also, many of us who went to the conferences did not have

as our professional focus these intercultural concerns; Heritage has provided us with opportunities we never would have had otherwise.

Team Teaching

The kind of team teaching fostered by the Heritage program exists on several levels. Team Teaching is part of the formal structure of Heritage. For example, the clusters described earlier are a type of team-teaching. Another part of the formal structure is our writer-in-residence who offers sessions to faculty on the teaching of writing, who presents workshops on writing to students, and who works with individual students referred by faculty members. Having the writer-in-residence as a team member defuses some of the tension--and anxiety--felt by the non-English faculty members who always suspect that the English faculty has a bag of tricks for the teaching of writing that they are not sharing with the rest of the world.

On the informal level, there is also room for innovations in team-teaching. During each semester faculty training sessions are held on particular texts. Faculty members are also free to teach together if their schedules permit. In one instance, faculty members decided to set one day aside for large group presentations, lectures, and films for enrichment. For the remaining 3 weekly class periods they remained in their individual classes. The advantages to such sharing are obvious. Faculty are able to model the oral presentation skills and the clear-thinking strategies that they expect of their students. In addition, faculty members are also enriching each other's approaches to the texts.

We have visions of expanding the team-teaching possibilities of Heritage during our next Fall retreat. Our plan is to "call for papers" from our colleagues, and then "teach" each other successful lessons based on the texts we have in common. The advantages of such an academic conference format would cut two ways: faculty members would experience being a student and seeing the text through the filter of a different discipline; the teaching faculty member would have the constructive feedback of peers on effective teaching techniques.

The limitations of team-teaching in Heritage need to be mentioned as well. There are faculty members who are uncomfortable with such a format. There are

personalities who feel excluded and threatened by the idea of team-teaching. The logistics are cumbersome; the degree of student response is often cool. But many of us at Carthage find this an exciting challenge to the traditional classroom.

Assessment

Now that the revised program is almost two years old, we have begun to address more seriously the problem of assessing the success of the Heritage Program.

In January, our writer-in-residence undertook the task of reading through all the portfolios of current Heritage students to see how well the program's written communication goals are being met; she is currently engaged in writing her report for the faculty.

We are not, as yet, doing a systematic assessment of our efforts in engendering awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity. One tool of assessment, student evaluations, has confirmed that most students are at least aware of the program's goals in this regard. For example, the questionnaire developed by the Director of Heritage asks the student, "How would you explain the goals, methods, and expectations of your Heritage course to a prospective new student?" Responses to this question, particularly when posed about Heritage III, have usually included references to multicultural concerns. Other questions point to the value of a classroom environment that is collaborative, learner-centered, and respectful of difference--for example, "Do you think your teacher tried to create a learning environment in which you felt encouraged and challenged to work together in groups with other students, both in and out of class"; "Do you think your teacher respected the idea that each student has unique talents and unique ways of learning?; Do you think your teacher tried to create a learning environment within which you could question and even challenge the ideas of others, including the teacher, other students, authors of class materials?" These kinds of questions, in addition to assessing particular classroom experiences, send a message to both faculty and students about the values Heritage wishes to engender; the assessment form itself becomes a teaching tool.

Diffusion of Heritage Skills, Methods and Values throughout the College

Heritage Studies has always been intended to be an agent of change within the institution. What goes on in Heritage we hope will increasingly emerge in other classrooms. Many--perhaps even most--of those who teach Heritage have found themselves modifying the classroom experiences of their non-Heritage courses. For example, an economics professor began using collaborative learning techniques and including more projects on the economic systems and behavior patterns of other cultures. Others have decreased the amount of time spent lecturing or have changed the traditional physical configuration of the desks to de-center themselves as the only classroom authority.

More generally, Heritage has allowed many of us to go beyond the confines of our discipline in dealing with our colleagues--to respect each other's talents and differences and to learn from each other's approaches. Given our sometimes acrimonious turf-wars between divisions and departments and the lack of an institutionalized system of interdisciplinary, team-taught courses, Heritage has functioned as the primary place for cross-disciplinary conversation and a shared intellectual and pedagogical culture. Within the Heritage faculty, it is not surprising to find oneself talking about the same text or pedagogical problem with faculty from three or four disciplines.

The program was also indirectly responsible for a significant change in the official college "Mission and Goals" statement. Last year, a social science professor, shortly after attending a conference on multicultural perspectives in higher education as a Heritage faculty member, successfully brought a motion before the entire faculty to include a experiencing and valuing cultural diversity as one of the college's missions.

The diffusion of Heritage's methods and values has not been as widespread or as rapid as many of us wish, and at times Heritage has divided the faculty as much as it has united it. Nonetheless, it has helped Carthage, a small, fairly homogeneous, rather traditional midwestern church-related college become more aware of and able to espouse multiculturalism.

Re-Thinking the Curriculum

The success of the Heritage Studies Program over the course of the four years since its inception has been a boon for Carthage College both financially and in terms of garnering recognition for the school; but that very success has placed a great strain on the rest of the curriculum. The Heritage Studies Program, it's important to reiterate, according to the Carthage Plan, was always intended to be "the entrance into the Carthage curriculum," and not the sole vehicle of curricular change. Nevertheless, especially over the past two years since the program has come into its own, the faculty have begun to realize that changes in the character of a Carthage education, as defined to a large extend by the multicultural concerns of Heritage, now need to be reflected in the curriculum as a whole. This has resulted in an ongoing and sometimes volatile debate among faculty and administration as to how the curriculum should develop over the next few years.

Most recently this debate has shifted from the nature and goal of the Heritage sequence to another dimension of the core curriculum, the Diversity and Competency Courses, and to the majors. For the past year and a half, Carthage has undertaken a comprehensive review of all majors, the intent of which has been not only to strengthen individual majors in accordance with the students' intellectual and professional needs, but to create a greater variety of course offerings, as well as create courses more reflective of our multicultural society. Though it would be misleading to suggest that this review has been uniformly successful in all the majors, we can affirm that the review has resulted in the improvement of those majors whose faculty have seriously engaged in the process of re-envisioning how their disciplines fit within the context of Carthage's commitment to developing an innovative curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences.

In turn, the debate over the greater portion of core curriculum, the Diversity and Competency Courses has become heated. Divided into seven distinct groups, the DC courses were originally intended to introduce students to the concepts, methodologies, thoughts and expressions of particular disciplines. Building on the skills developed in the Heritage Studies Program, the DC courses

are writing and speaking intensive, and are structured to foster the student's general education. Through the DCC core requirement it was assumed that innovative cross-disciplinary offerings eventually would be developed. This has not been the case, since many faculty have been forced to teach introductory courses rather than develop new cross-disciplinary courses (or even innovative courses within their disciplines) due to the demand of the DCCs. Moreover, many students complain that the DCC requirements, combined with their major requirements, put tremendous constraints on their ability to finish college in four years.

One positive result of these pressures has been the formation of a committee whose task is to review the Carthage Plan as a whole, as well as to solicit plans for revision from the faculty and students. Does Carthage need to enforce its philosophical and pedagogical commitment to general education through "target" DC courses, most of which are introductory in nature, or can the core curriculum be liberated in a way that avoids the "smorgasbord" approach while still providing students with the kind of diverse educational experience that will empower them in the future, regardless of their chosen professions? Despite the stresses attendant upon re-thinking the curriculum, it is this goal of empowering both students and faculty that lies at the heart of the changes initiated through the Heritage Program over the past four years, and will remain at the heart of our efforts as we continue to shape the future.